

- o Those NEW Atlas & Dentron Radio Ads

Postal inspectors are scrutinizing the activities of a Michael Harrison (call sign believed to be WB2PTI) and John McNamara both of Long Island in connection with a possible mail fraud carrier out against ham radio operators that could total into the six figure bracket! No one seems to know whether the problems are due to difficulties associated with a greatly expanding new business - or are an out-in-out swindle.

The "NEW" Atlas Radio

The December issue of 73 Magazine (page 111) carries a two-color full-page Atlas Radio, Inc. advertisement which shouts that Atlas is now back in business as an equipment distributor. The ad says that Atlas is now marketing the President 10-meter mobile transceiver at a "you won't be disappointed" price. A smaller ad (on page 104) indicates that price to be \$219.95 - prepaid to all fifty states.

The new Atlas Radio Company is operating out of a post office box in Lynnbrook, Long Island, NY. The connection between the old and new Atlas Radio company was made by a statement that the firm was equipped to service "our past models of equipment, 180, 210X, 215X, 350XL, etc." The ad also claimed that Atlas and the Uniden Corporation of America had "joined forces" to bring out the AR/HR 2510 transceiver. That has really caught Uniden's attention!

We got into this when we received a phone call from one of our subscribers, Carl Miller/AE6W of Stockton, California, alerting us to the possible sham. Miller said he ordered the HR-2510 transceiver in November via a credit card. He later talked to John McNamara who said they "were having trouble with credit cards" and to send a check. Miller's December 1st \$219.95 check was cashed on December 6th ...but no ten-meter radio was shipped.

Miller told us that he knew of at least four other amateurs who had a similar experience. Another amateur, W6DFG/Clarence Arndt of N. Highlands, California, runs a 40 meter net and he too received several reports of California amateurs complaining about non-delivery of radio equipment. "There was one ham in the Bay area that got together with a couple other amateurs and ordered Atlas HR-2510's and never got them. I called the postal inspector and they were very interested in this. Clarence said that if any other amateur has any information they should call (516) 933-2416 or write to the Postal Inspector, PO Box 160, Hicksville, NY 11802-0160 - Attention of Annette Cossaro or Martin Biegelman.

The phone number listed in the Atlas advertisements is answered by an

answering machine which asks you to leave your name and phone number if you want to purchase the HR-2510. "If you are having difficulty reaching us, you may write Atlas Radio Company, Post Office Box 763, Lynnbrook, NY 11563." The same answering machine voice responds to Dentron Radio Company, Inc. ads.

We also heard rumors but that other well known "out of business" firms had been mysteriously resurrected at addresses on Long Island. One of those firms was Dentron Radio operating out of a Post Office box in neighboring East Rockaway.

Dennis J. Had/K8KXX, of Raleigh, NC is the founder and original owner of Dentron - a name he coined from his own. He is also a subscriber to this newsletter, so I phoned Dennie to ask him about Dentron coming back to life. Dennie said the name Dentron was federally trademarked and sold to EDI Industries in Texas. He said that although he was aware of the Dentron ads, he was not aware of any connection between EDI and the "new" Dentron.

I gave Dennie the two Long Island phone numbers listed in the Dentron and Atlas advertisements and asked him to call them. According to the 516 area code operator, neither Atlas nor Dentron have listed, non-published or unlisted Long Island phone numbers. Dennie called back and confirmed that "absolutely, without a doubt ... no question about it," both voices were that of Michael Harrison, a fellow that "cost him some \$14 thousand back in 1979" and uses assumed names. "Someone needs to stop him. I can't understand how any publication would run his ads - most amateur publications know him. Publications have a moral, ethical ...and possibly legal obligation. They want to get paid and should know who the principals are."

Another ham, Paul Kidd/KK6H, of Point Reyes Station, CA sent in over \$100 for two Dentron parts and never got the parts. Paul saw the Dentron ad in the September 73 Magazine (page 79) on August 23rd and telephoned the firm. He had a Dentron DTR-1200L amplifier which needed a band switch and high voltage capacitor. Michael Harrison told Paul that he had the part in stock and to send a letter requesting an estimate.

On August 30th, Harrison asked for \$90 for the band switch and \$17 for the doorknob capacitor and to "Please issue your personal check on receipt of this quotation." KK6H sent his check on Sept. 10th. When Paul didn't receive any response, followup inquiries were sent on October 21st, November 8, 21 and a "final attempt" on November 28th. That letter said legal action would take place on December 15th if he didn't hear anything - which he didn't. Paul turned the situation over to his postmaster.

A letter has now been received on Jan. 6th - dated Jan. 1 - from Harrison stating that "We plan to deliver" but that "bandswitched must be custom made..." Kidd/KK6H has no idea if he will ever see the needed parts ...or his money. Paul told us that 73 Magazine has now cancelled all future Harrison advertisements. "December is the last one and QST has never accepted Michael Harrison ads" due to a prior incident that he was involved in.

a

Harrison also ran ads for several months in later 1988 in the Ham Trader Yellow Sheets. About a year and a half earlier, other ads appeared using one of three Long Island addresses. Those ads were for the acquisition of "rare" and "unused" famous-maker amateur radio gear including the Drake R-7, TR-7/A Line, the late T-4XC/R4C line and "meatball" (round emblem) Rockwell/Collins S-Line. Now there are ads for this same equipment by "Mike of Baldwin" offering it for sale with no specific prices or numbers of models available. Many collectors of rare and expensive radio equipment now believe this to be merely an attractive calling card. Harrison apparently wants to get amateurs on the phone to sell them something else. We have not gotten any report that he has sold or even owned any of the advertised vintage equipment.

The January 1989 index of 73 Magazine (page 86) refers readers to page 11 for further information on Atlas. The details on page 11 is that the founder and designer of the old Atlas Radio, Herb Johnson/W6QKI of Oceanside, California, wanted to stress two points: Atlas Radio was liquidated in 1979 and was not sold to any other company and that only one qualified service organization exists for original Atlas Radio equipment and it is not the firm listed in the December new Atlas Radio advertisement. We tried to call Herb at his Oceanside, California, callbook address, but there was no listing. He apparently has moved. One thing for certain: Johnson is disavowing any connection whatsoever with the "new" Atlas ... just as Dennie Had/K8KXK did with the "new" Dentron.

CQ Magazine told us they have stopped accepting advertisements from Michael Harrison because of numerous complaints of equipment sent in for repair but its return not being handled properly. Ad manager, Arny Sposato/KA2TYA said he had a large file with "quite a number of Michael Harrison complaints ...more than on anyone else."

The Uniden Radio Joint Venture

We were able to reach a spokesman for Uniden, however. They say they have had several inquiries about an inferred Atlas/Uniden joint venture and undelivered mail ordered radios. Uniden said there is no business relationship whatsoever between the Uniden Corporation and

Atlas Radio although it is possible HR-2510 radios could have been purchased by Atlas from a distributor. "A joint venture is not even close to the actual case, however," we were told. Uniden is not aware that any HR-2510's have been sold to Atlas Radio, Inc.

The HR-2510 ten meter transceiver has only been on the market since last March. About 15,000 have already been shipped. Uniden distributors can charge what they want, but their cost from Uniden is approximately \$205. (A \$5 increase went into effect January 1). A \$219 retail price with prepaid transportation does not allow any distributor profit and Uniden is baffled as to how the radio can be sold that low. "No distributor can have an overstock. The 10-meter radio has been in short supply since day one."

Uniden said they started to hear complaints from people who sent in money for the radio and never got the product around the first week in December. They even got a touching letter from a preacher who saved up his money to buy one from Atlas and never got it. Uniden is very concerned since the advertising clearly infers that Atlas and Uniden are in business together. Federal law regarding mail order is very clear - if you don't send the product within 30 days, you must give the customer an option of a refund or later shipment. The customer has the choice. This apparently was not happening in many cases.

Letters were going out acknowledging receipt of order - "Thank you for your support - we have sold thousands of units - because of this demand we have a backlog. Please try to understand the most recent position we are in and we are doing everything to deliver your order. You may request a refund." At the bottom of the letter was the notation offering a \$25 rebate for waiting. This rebate check supposedly will be mailed during the month of January. According to Uniden, mailing a \$25 rebate puts the radio below distributor's cost. These letters apparently meet the letter of the law, but they appear to be "buying time."

Atlas Radio has refused to accept credit card... "Since these prices are so low, we can not take credit card orders." Only checks or money orders were accepted which were immediately cashed. One amateur ordered the radio from an October Ham Radio magazine Atlas Radio classified ad. His November 1st check was cashed on November 7.

Several complaints have been registered with postal inspectors on Long Island and a criminal indictment could result. Although they refused to go into detail, we also understand that Uniden is taking additional unspecified legal action. They certainly do not want their name or reputation linked to possible mail fraud.

There may be a reasonable answer for all of this, but our phone calls to both Dentron and Atlas were not returned - and many amateurs are very unhappy with the handling they are receiving. If you have any further information on the activities of Michael Harrison, or the "new" Atlas or Dentron Radio companies, we would like to hear from you. We also heard that Harrison may be operating under other company names such as Osborne Computer and Webster Radio which may - or may not - be true.

[End this issue]